

# Zines! A Primer



Unfold me for a mini-zine template!

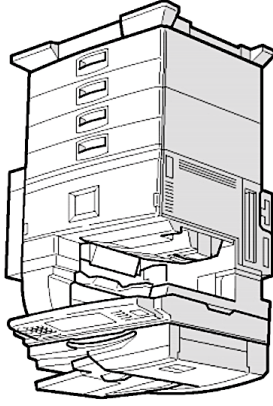
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## Let's get to work!

Although the following might read like steps to follow, the truth is you have to consider making, copying, and circulating your zines all at once. For example: the space you utilize per sheet of paper will affect the number of copies you'll make. And the way you distribute your zine (perhaps publicly) might affect the content (perhaps anonymously).

**Make.** What do you need to say and how much room do you have to say it? Like a book, zines have content, but there are many choices to make: what size paper do you want to use and how will you use the space? do you want to use staples, thread, or something else to hold it together? do you want to lay it out on a computer, draw/handwrite, or collage with scissors and glue? You also have to consider the copy.



**Copy.** One of the most important principles to remember when making zines is that you first design a prototype — an original copy — that will look different when it gets reproduced on a copy machine. Black & white (+w) is ideal for beginners since it's accessible, cheap, and uncomplicated. Nevertheless, your copies will not look quite like the original and so it's a good idea to test prints on the photocopier from time to time. Plus, once you get comfortable using these machines, you can begin to play around with enlargement, contrast, and other settings.

**Circulate.** How many zines did you make? Who gets one and how? You can give them out to friends and enemies, "shop drop" them on buses or restrooms, or sell/trade them with others in faraway places through one of the distros listed on the other page.

## Where can I get some?

**Pioneer's Press** — Run by some great people out in Kansas. Order radical zines, books, posters, and more.

**Quimby's** — Famous underground bookstore in Chicago that carries thousands of titles.

**Atomic Books** — Another great underground bookstore specializing in weird stuff.

**Printed Matter** — Book art and edgy zines out of NYC.

**Antiquated Future** — Distro out of Portland.

**Sweet Candy** — Another distro that has been around for over 10 years.

**Stranger Danger** — Chicago distro specializing in queer, trans, and feminist zines.

**Word Distribution** — Jersey distro focusing on "cats, food, sex, silliness or that sort of thing"

## Where can I learn more?

**Stolen Sharpie Revolution** — Alex Wreck

**Watcha Mean, What's a Zine?** — Mark Todd & Esther Pearl Watson

**Making Handmade Books** — Alisha Golden

**Make a Zine!** — Bill Brent & Joe Biel

**"Ten Tips for First Time Zinesters"** (online)

**Spill the Zines** — "An Introduction to Zines" (online) — **The Public Studio**

**"How to Make a Zine"** (online) — **Rookie**

**Where can I share them?**

**We Make Zines** — Social media site for zinesters to solicit contributions, trade zines, or otherwise sell their work.

**POC Zine Project** — Important resource that advocates for nonwhite zines and Black Lives Matter through materiality.

**Broken Pencil** — Longtime Canadian print and online magazine that specializes in North American zine culture.

**Hazorcake** — Punk print magazine that reviews zines.

## Where'd they come from?

Zines have their most immediate roots in sci-fi fanzines of the 1930s-60s, the hardcore and punk scenes of the 70s, and more recently in the identity & gender politics of the 80s and 90s (especially riot grrrr and queer communities).



Zines have seen a resurgence since the late 2000s, perhaps as a backlash against an overly saturated, commercialized, internet; paradoxically, however, these same writers have embraced

the web to connect with other zines and/or circulate their print publications through distros or at zine festivals across North American and Europe. While there may be fewer zines circulating than in the early 90s, they're more visible than ever.

Put most simply, zines are self-made, self-circulated, DIY print publications that obsess over some sort of passion, whether its music, politics, sex, food, jobs, toys, etc. While circulations typically run small (5-200 copies), collectively zinesters represent one of the largest networks of self-published writers in the world. At the same time, zines are hard to define because of their variety. They're often made by individuals, but are sometimes the end result of collective efforts. They can be handmade or desktop published. They're often stapled, but sometimes held together by stitches or rubber bands. Regardless of the kind of bindings, folds, inks, or paper used, what's essential about zines is that they are material. That is, they are distributed through the mail, DIY shops (called distros), or at one of the dozens of zine festivals held annually throughout the world.



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